

April 6, 2006

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to reiterate my sincere belief that command and control of Mississippi's National Guard assets must remain with civilian authorities in times of emergency. I am expressing this belief to you because I understand the U.S. Forces Northern Command is advocating a change in national policy that would put Mississippi Guard units under the direct control of active duty military officers. In my post-Katrina experience such a change in policy would at very least be counter-productive and at worst could actually disrupt immediate recovery efforts.

For example, by their very nature, particularly in the field of first response, the highly-trained members of National Guard units are absolutely essential to effective implementation of local and state disaster recovery plans. My fear is that federalization of these valuable resources could cause delay or confusion at a time when immediate action and clarity are essential to saving lives and protecting property.

When additional assets are needed, as was demonstrated during both the 2004 hurricane season and in response and recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact works extremely well. During Katrina more than 14,500 National Guard personnel from 35 states and Puerto Rico assisted with assets and personnel in Mississippi.

In short, my personal experiences after Katrina and instincts toward good policy convince me that command and control of National Guard units must remain with Governors. I encourage you to support that policy.

Sincerely,

Haley R. Barbour
Governor